

Setting and Its Roles**ACADEMIC VOCABULARY**

setting: the time and place where action unfolds in a story, drama, or other literary work.

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Identify *where* the action takes place. Look for details that tell:

- if the action happens in a real place or imaginary place, indoors or outdoors.
- if the action happens in the country, city, or other area.
- what you as an observer of the scene can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel.
- how people act in this place—ways they speak, actions they must take.

Step 2: Identify *when* the action takes place. Look for details that tell:

- if the action takes place in the past, present, or future.
- what time of day and what season of the year it is.
- what the habits or customs of the people are at this time.

Step 3: Explore *how* the setting affects the story, its role or roles in the story. How does the setting help determine the conflict? The plot? The mood? How does it shape the characters' feelings or personalities?

Step 4: Sometimes readers must **infer** the setting, or make a logical guess based on evidence. When a narrator does not directly state the time or place, you can use past experience and details from the text to infer the time and place.

EXAMPLE

What can you infer about the setting from this story detail from “The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs?

Outside, the wind was higher than ever, and the old man started nervously at the sound of a door banging.

Detail: “Outside . . .”

Inference: The action unfolds indoors.

Detail: “the wind was higher than ever”

Inference: The action unfolds during a storm.

Detail: “the old man stared nervously”

Inference: The location may be old and/or remote.

Detail: “sound of a door banging.”

Inference: The action unfolds in an old, quiet house.